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ABSTRACT

This is the first of the progress and interim reports prepared for an evaluation study of compensatory education programs to be completed by 1977. This report describes and analyzes those parts of the research proposed in the research plan which have, to date, been fully designed and funded. These consist of (1) a description and discussion of projects initiated in FY 1975, the questions addressed by each, and their expected results; (2) a description of major projects to be undertaken during FY 1976; and, (3) an analysis of policy issues which have emerged from responses to the requests for proposals issued to date. Six major studies in the areas of student development, funds allocation, and administration comprise the on-going research. Major projects to be funded during FY 1976 will, it is stated, deal with funds allocation and administration. Implications of research proposals identify several important issues with respect to early reading curricula, alternative designs for compensatory education programs, and demonstration projects. (Author/AM)

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INTRODUCTION

Section 821 of the Education Amendments of 1974 (P.L. 93-380) instructed the National Institute of Education to conduct a "thorough evaluation and study of compensatory education programs." The study is to be completed by September 30, 1977, in time to provide Congress with information during its deliberations on the reauthorization of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which distributes funds to school districts with high concentrations of low income students for compensatory education programs.

As defined by Section 821, the study of compensatory education programs will include:

(1) an examination of the fundamental purposes of such programs, and the effectiveness of such programs in attaining such purposes;

(2) an analysis of means to identify accurately the children who have the greatest need for such programs, in keeping with the fundamental purposes thereof;

(3) an analysis of the effectiveness of methods and procedures for meeting the educational needs of children, including the use of individualized written educational plans for children, and programs for training the teachers of children;

(4) an exploration of alternative methods, including the use of procedures to assess educational disadvantage, for distributing funds under such programs to States, to State educational agencies, and to local educational agencies in an equitable and efficient manner, which will accurately reflect current conditions and insure that such funds reach the areas of greatest current need and are effectively used for such areas;

(5) not more than 20 experimental programs, which shall be reasonably geographically representative, to be administered by the Institute, in cases where the Institute determines that such experimental programs are necessary to carry out the purposes of clauses (1) through (4).

As required by the legislation, NIE submitted a Research Plan to Congress on December 16, 1974, and, after a review period of 30 days of continuous session of Congress, began the study.

This interim report--six months after February 15, 1975, the official beginning date of the study--is the first of the progress and interim reports which we shall prepare as the study proceeds. It describes and analyzes those parts of the research proposed in the Research Plan which have, to date, been fully designed and funded and consists of:

- a description and discussion of projects initiated in FY 1975, the questions addressed by each, and their expected results;
- a description of major projects to be undertaken during FY 1976; and,
- an analysis of policy issues which have emerged from responses to the Requests for Proposals issued to date.

ONGOING RESEARCH

As described in the Research Plan, the Compensatory Education Study focuses on three main areas:

Student Development -- which covers the nature and objectives of existing compensatory programs in schools, the requirements of successful compensatory education and the effectiveness of available instructional approaches.

Funds Allocation -- which covers research into the range of feasible criteria for allocation of federal funds to states and counties, to school districts, and to schools and students within districts. Research in this area will assess the effects of alternative Title I eligibility criteria on the resources received by various states, districts and schools, and will evaluate criteria on their effectiveness in targeting funds to those children most in need of compensatory education.

Administration of Compensatory Programs -- which covers research into the workings of the administrative machinery charged with identifying and serving children in need of compensatory education, including the impact and results of program regulations and guidelines.

The study's mandate, as laid down in the 1974 Education Amendments, provides for an interim report to the President and Congress no later than December 31, 1976 and a final report nine months later. The research to be conducted in the next twelve months, therefore, consists, in large part, of those projects which will take the longest period to complete or which will provide data to be used in other parts of the study. The major efforts are

devoted to a large-scale national survey of compensatory education activities and to several demonstration projects authorized by the "experimental programs" language of the legislation.

With respect to the three main areas listed above, NIE has begun six major studies, four in the area of Student Development, and one each in Funds Allocation and Administration. A discussion of each of the six studies funded to date follows.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

(1) District Survey I

District Survey I is the only nationally representative survey of ongoing programs[1] included in the Study, and is designed to produce a comprehensive picture of existing goals, organization, instructional and evaluation techniques of compensatory education. District Survey I will collect in-depth descriptive data in approximately 100 districts, and provide detailed information on: the objectives of ongoing compensatory programs; their organization, and their relationship to regular programs; district planning and evaluation techniques; parent involvement practices; and the use of teacher training. The Survey will collect general information about the frequency and type of individualized instruction provided in compensatory programs, and this will contribute to site selection for a large-scale study of individualized instruction methods. Data from the Survey will also

[1] Other surveys will deal with specific instructional techniques or administrative problems.

be used to supplement and interpret the findings of the Compensatory Education Study's research into administration and into the results of the demonstration projects.

Currently we lack complete information about the nature of the programs funded by Title I and other compensatory programs. Only general descriptions of the incidence of various types of programs are available, and we have almost no knowledge of the actual objectives and operating characteristics of compensatory education in representative districts. As a result, reading and math scores have been used to assess programs which were in fact providing general cultural enrichment or health services. In some districts, compensatory funds, spent in good faith efforts to help educationally disadvantaged children, have not been focused on their unique needs. This situation makes it extremely difficult to interpret existing evaluation data, and District Survey I has been designed to indicate the extent to which compensatory funds are providing coherent programs in response to the needs of educationally disadvantaged pupils. It will, therefore, provide information which we currently lack about the characteristics of programs supported by Title I and other compensatory education efforts.

(2) Design Contracts for a Study of Individualized Instruction

The study of individualized instruction responds to the specific Congressional mandate to study individualized educational plans. Several contractors are now clarifying the concepts and research methods involved, and their work will be used by NIE in designing and implementing its large-scale study of the effectiveness of individualized instruction in the teaching of reading and mathematics.

Individualized instruction, in which curriculum and rate of progress vary for each child, has been identified as a promising strategy for compensatory education students. However, the types of individualized instruction studied have varied as has the extent to which they were well implemented. Moreover, the individualized approach has not been compared adequately with well-implemented "standardized" instruction. NIE will examine well-implemented individualized and standardized approaches and provide conclusions concerning:

- o the effectiveness of individualized instruction, including the use of written educational plans, for compensatory education programs;
- o the aspects of individualization which are crucial;
- o successful methods of involving parents in individualized programs; and,
- o the conditions for successful implementation.

(3) Research Syntheses

These syntheses will examine program effectiveness by drawing together research and evaluation findings related to the effectiveness of reading and mathematics in compensatory education. They will review evaluations of compensatory education programs; existing research on individualized instruction; research on the nature of reading problems and the degree to which different reading programs are effective for teaching particular skills and dealing with particular problems; and work on activity-based mathematics. Activity-based mathematics consists of teaching mathematics through the use of concrete objects (e.g., an abacus) and is extremely common in compensatory education programs, but firm conclusions on its effectiveness are not available. Finally, the syntheses include a large project to

synthesize knowledge on beginning reading instruction and suggest appropriate curricula for teaching reading in the early grades.

(4) Alternative Designs for Compensatory Education

This project responds to that part of the Study mandate requiring the consideration of alternative ways of meeting the needs of compensatory education pupils. It will produce designs of alternative approaches to those currently used, including instructional techniques and implementation procedures, which could be adapted for use by schools and districts.

Among the approaches to be considered are: the use of small ungraded schools; heavy emphasis on the home culture of minority-group children; peer tutoring; and emphasis on programs for intermediate grades.

FUNDS ALLOCATION

(5) Demonstration Projects

Sixteen contracts have been awarded to states, with school districts as subcontractors, to plan for projects to demonstrate the effects of changing rules for allocating Title I funds within school districts. During the 1975-76 school year, the sixteen districts will develop and refine their plans to change the eligibility criteria under which schools receive funds from poverty to achievement and/or to change the number of schools and pupils who participate in Title I. During the 1976-77 and 1977-78 school years, those districts whose plans are accepted will operate under changed fund allocation procedures, authorized by the waivers specified under Subsection 821 (a)(5) of the Study mandate. Abt Associates has been selected as the

independent contractor to observe the effects of the demonstration projects during the planning year and during implementation, and collect data on the characteristics of programs and of participating schools and students before and after the changes.

ADMINISTRATION

(6) Survey of Legal Standards

In addition to the requirements of federal regulations for ESEA Title I, compensatory education is strongly affected by state additions to, and interpretations of, these regulations and by regulations governing other state compensatory programs. The survey will examine and compare these requirements and analyze the internal consistency of sets of regulations, the relationships between them, and their implications for the organization and content of compensatory education at school and district level.

MAJOR PROJECTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 1976

Because NIE has, during the first year, focused the Study on the major area of student development, much of the research to be funded during the coming year will deal with the two other major areas: funds allocation and administration.

Funds Allocation

The Study will concentrate on the feasibility and effects of using alternative eligibility criteria and funding formulae at the national level. Computer simulations will be used to examine the effects for county and district allocation of using (a) the alternative definitions of poverty produced by the Assistant Secretary of Education's Office under Section 823 of the 1974 Education Amendments and (b) achievement criteria. The effects on overall educational spending of using different types of compensatory education grants (e.g., block vs matching grants) will be examined, as will the nature and implications of the formulae used by state compensatory programs. During the coming year, NIE will also fund an investigation of the nature and effects of current subcounty allocation practices (i.e., the way in which county-by-county Title I grants are divided among school districts), and a study of the relationship between family poverty and educational achievement.

Administration

Major work on program administration will also be undertaken during the next year. Research will begin this fall on the impact of state education

agencies' management practices on the administration of local programs and on the delivery of compensatory education services to schools and students.

State Educational Agencies will be studied and compared in order to see how, for example, their provision of technical assistance to districts, or their monitoring of district activities affect the extent to which districts implement coherent well-planned compensatory programs; the degree to which compensatory education funds are reaching the intended recipients; and the extent of coordination which exists between compensatory programs and regular classroom instruction.

Student Development

In this area, the major new project to be funded in the coming year is the study of individualized instruction. As explained above, several design contracts have already been let, which will be used by NIE in order to produce the final design for this study. During this year, the data collection for District Survey I will also be completed, and the first analyses will appear.

IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS

During the next year, NIE hopes to make available preliminary data and results of the studies already funded. This information and its policy implications will be the subject of future interim reports.

Some of the major concerns of practitioners, as well as tentative conclusions about existing research findings, have already become apparent during the process of awarding contracts for the research efforts now underway.

In particular, several important issues have already been raised with respect to: early reading curricula, alternative designs for compensatory education programs, and demonstration projects.

Synthesis of Early Reading Research

For the last decade, compensatory education efforts have concentrated on the preschool and early elementary grades, and approximately 80% of compensatory funds are currently allocated to Grades K-3, with a heavy emphasis on reading. In part, this is because theorists believed extra help early in school to be potentially more successful, and early learning uniquely important for later academic success. In part, this results because illiteracy is so clearly and dramatically a handicap and because the problem when "Johnny can't read" is so visible to the community (and the press).

During this period, there has consequently been a great deal of research into beginning reading, and investigation of alternative approaches and curricula. There has also been considerable debate and disagreement about the relative merits of alternative curricula. However, researchers consulted by

NIE in its conferences on reading have concluded that enough is now known to synthesize both research at a highly theoretical level and evidence on teaching practices. This synthesis can help reach conclusions on which a wide range of beginning reading experts will agree. Under a contract from the Compensatory Education Study, the Learning Research and Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh will be building upon previously funded NIE research to define the components of satisfactory curricula for the teaching of beginning reading, in terms of which existing programs can be assessed. This project, if successful, promises to mark a major step forward in helping practitioners design effective compensatory education programs, and in the evaluation of the techniques and approaches now in use.

Alternative Designs for Compensatory Education

Ten years of experience and research in compensatory education have provided large numbers of people with evidence of what does and does not "work," and with ideas concerning possible and fruitful approaches which have not yet been tested adequately. However, like program evaluations and research into specific aspects of compensatory education instruction, much of this material is scattered and unordered. This project was intended to tap the "frontier" of thinking on compensatory education, in order to inform Congress of any less-known approaches which deserve greater exposure, or might be encouraged by Federal policy. Four contractors have been funded to produce alternative designs, but the proposals submitted (whether from community and minority groups or from long-established research institutions) reflected several major themes.

First, there was a uniform and strong commitment to involving parents and the community in compensatory programs more than is common at present. In those proposals specifically concerned with minority groups, this commitment took the form of stressing a need for programs drawing on students' home culture, while the influence of the performance contracting experiments and accountability movement were evident in proposals that parents and students be involved in setting instructional goals and requirements.

A second characteristic of the proposals was the extent to which they reflected, in their recommendations for compensatory programs, the interest in career education and work skills now evident in the regular school curriculum. The instructional techniques suggested also reflected the main conclusions of recent research, with individualized instruction or peer tutoring appearing in most proposals.

Third, although interest in the preschool years is still great, there is considerable and probably growing interest in compensatory programs for older children. Several proposals involved cross-grade integration involving secondary as well as elementary pupils, or compensatory programs specifically for older students.

Finally, they showed little tendency to advocate a move away from the regular school as the institution charged with compensatory education, and probably less tendency than in the 1960s to use the school as a vehicle for tasks other than its traditional functions. There were some differences--for example, in a stress on health services from pregnancy onwards as a crucial component of compensatory education. However, most proposals, whether

from universities or community organizations, were concerned with rather limited educational outcomes.

The projects selected will provide detailed designs which reflect these current tendencies, along with descriptions of implementation procedures, so that they have the potential for use by schools. They will provide blueprints for:

--the use of peer tutoring, with older students working with elementary pupils as an integral, non-voluntary part of their curriculum. Limited experiments with this approach have shown significant gains for both groups, especially the older pupils.

--compensatory programs which draw on the home culture of minority group pupils, and make school personnel more sensitive to its strengths; increase community involvement; and emphasize attitudes and motivation.

--small ungraded schools, with fewer teachers, much heavier use of parents and paraprofessionals and involvement of parents and students in the setting of performance requirements.

--compensatory programs especially tailored to the needs of the 12-15 year old age group, and emphasizing basic skills. Existing innovative projects for this group, and obstacles to their implementation will be examined carefully.

Demonstration Projects

Between April and June 1975, NIE conducted a competition among school districts to select participants in experimental projects in the area of fund allocation. The Request for Proposals was distributed to districts by the State Education Agencies, each of which screened responses and submitted up to two for consideration by NIE. All proposals were required to have the signature and approval of the District Parent Advisory Council. Because of time constraints, many districts informed NIE that they would be unable to submit proposals.

The demonstration projects are authorized under Subsection 821 (a)(5) of the Study mandate, which states that it shall include:

> (5) not more than 20 experimental programs, which shall be reasonably geographically representative, to be administered by the Institute, in cases where the Institute determines that such experimental programs are necessary to carry out the purposes of clauses (1) through (4), and the Commissioner of Education is authorized, notwithstanding any provision of title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, at the request of the Institute, to approve the use of grants which educational agencies are eligible to receive under such title I (in cases where the agency eligible for such grant agrees to such use) in order to carry out such experimental programs.

This authority enables NIE to test and examine the results of changes in current regulations regarding the allocation of Title I funds and services within LEAs.

As designed, the research was intended specifically to examine:

- o districts' preferences and rationales for changes in the eligibility criteria used to distribute Title I funds to schools within a district, and the feasibility and results of such changes.
- o districts' preferences and rationales for increasing or decreasing the extent to which Title I funds are concentrated in a limited number of eligible schools, and the feasibility and results of such changes.
- o districts' preferences and rationales for increasing or decreasing the extent to which Title I funds are concentrated on a limited number of eligible pupils, and the feasibility and results of such changes.

Sixteen proposals for changes in these areas have now been selected for funding through a planning year (See Table I). The results of this planning will then determine which district proposals are actually implemented.

TABLE I

DISTRICTS SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS*

DISTRICT	# Schools currently served under Title I	# Schools proposed to be served under Title I	# Students currently served by Title I	# Students to be served by Title I	1974-75 Title I Budget
Mesa, Arizona	19	31	1400	--	325,457
Alum Rock, California	8	27	2420	4807	850,000
Adams County, Colorado		16	581	850-1000	141,230
Wichita, Kansas	19	77	4130	5000	1,862,874
Boston, Massachusetts	96	105	12,000	13,134	7,400,000
Charlotte, North Carolina	47	70 - 73	--	11,000-18,000	2,165,810
Winston-Salem, North Carolina	19	42	2919	2919	1,558,000
Santa Fe, New Mexico	--	18	1072	334	498,841
Freeport, New York	6	6	240	720	620,000
Yonkers, New York	23	25	4274	--	2,587,532
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	60	85	10,104	15,000	1,989,913
Newport, Rhode Island	6	--	660	--	270,030
Houston, Texas	81	83	24,173	36,000	6,129,656
Berkeley County, West Virginia	13	15	682	900	254,000
Harrison County, West Virginia	25	34	1000	1700-2000	404,499
Racine, Wisconsin	10	15	1650	+ 20%	1,060,268

*Data is from the district proposals, and is incomplete in some cases; in most instances where numbers of proposed schools and students are given, they remain tentative until the end of the planning year.

Although it is impossible to prejudge the policy implications and feasibility of the proposed changes, the uniformity of districts' responses make it possible to draw some tentative conclusions about the principal concerns of state and local practitioners with respect to fund allocation. Both in determining eligibility and in deciding how Title I services should be distributed, the proposals displayed similar preferences, and cited similar reasons for the changes they proposed.

Eligibility Criteria

In its Request for Proposals, NIE invited districts to suggest alternative measures for identifying Title I eligible schools--either student achievement measures, or indices of poverty other than those currently used by the district. With one exception, all 27 school districts wishing to change their eligibility criteria wished to employ student achievement measures to determine schools' eligibility for Title I funds, and all 16 funded proposals involve such a change. The districts competing included small rural districts, medium-sized cities, suburbs of large cities, and inner-city districts, and entries thus suggest widespread interest in the use of achievement scores for within-district allocation.

The eligibility criteria currently used by the districts are essentially limited to free lunches, free textbooks, census data and AFDC counts. The lack of other reliable poverty criteria may explain the districts' interest in achievement criteria. However, in proposing the use of such criteria, the districts did not cite the outdated or unreliable nature of existing methods

but, rather, argued that using educational measures to distribute educational services was more appropriate.

In every case, districts define the task of the schools as strictly one of educating children, in the sense of teaching them to perform successfully the classic skills of literacy and numeracy. They therefore want directly to identify pupils who need academic help, and distribute funds accordingly.

Many districts also provided clear empirical reasons for finding attendance area poverty unsatisfactory as a criterion for distributing Title I funds to educationally disadvantaged children. Of these, by far and away, the most important was desegregation.

In a large number of urban and suburban districts, educationally disadvantaged students from poor areas are now attending schools whose attendance areas have a far higher average family income. These children need additional educational services, and their new schools face novel tasks and problems. However, the schools do not receive Title I funds, which continue to go to the schools which are physically situated in poor areas.

Moreover, in desegregation cases, many children previously in compensatory education programs not only lose their access to additional services, but also have their instructional program interrupted.

Even in districts in which desegregation is not an issue, children in need of compensatory education are often not concentrated in specific areas. Old or new housing patterns (e.g., housing projects funded by Model Cities) mean that concentrated pockets of poor children, many of them in need of extra educational help, are found in school attendance areas whose average

income is too high for them to receive Title I funds. Districts' proposals argued that if, instead of poverty, achievement data were used to determine eligibility, money could be channelled to these students.

Concentration

At present, districts must concentrate their Title I funds in a limited number of schools and on a limited number of students, in order to guarantee that compensatory education services add substantially to the regular school program. Federal guidelines call for expenditures per child to equal at least one-half the amount spent on his regular program, and some states require fixed numbers of dollars per pupil. (California, for example, requires per-pupil expenditures of $350 in all Title I programs.)

The reasoning behind this is that there exists a certain "critical mass" of educational resources to which an educationally disadvantaged child must have access before he can be expected to make significant progress.[2] Funds are therefore targeted in order to provide such relatively expensive programs to pupils in a limited number of schools. Concentration on schools may be further justified by the argument that the presence of a large number of educationally disadvantaged pupils poses problems which are different in kind as well as in degree from those faced when the number of disadvantaged pupils is smaller.

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[2]The study most often cited in support of this view is Herbert Kiesling. Reading Performance of Disadvantaged Children Cost Effectiveness of Educational Inputs. (Urban Institute, 1973)

However, not everyone agrees that high concentration is essential for students' academic growth. Some argue that the evidence for concentration is an artifact of the statistical techniques that researchers use to draw inferences about the significance of changes in achievement, and that students gain from even small improvements in the educational services they receive.

Concentration requirements are also criticized because they require districts to discriminate arbitrarily between needy students, and because they tend to produce separate and somewhat self-contained Title I programs with little relationship to, or effect on, the regular classroom. Because of these conflicting arguments, NIE invited proposals to change concentration in any direction; that is, to increase it for both schools and pupils, increase it for one and decrease it for the other, or decrease it for both.

Without exception, the districts responding proposed to decrease concentration among schools. Moreover, over 80% wished also to decrease concentration among pupils. Title I funds could, it was argued, be used to better effect in this way and with greater total gains.[3] Districts argued against the unfairness of helping only some eligible schools and pupils, and tended to believe that proportional increases in services yielded proportional gains.

The demonstration projects will enable NIE to examine the validity of such arguments under a wide range of circumstances. Proposed changes in concentration vary from very small to very substantial, and districts also vary in the degree of concentration they practice at present, in the percentage difference which Title I funds make to per-pupil expenditure for participating

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[3]This may prove difficult to assess. Who is to say whether it is better to raise six children's reading scores from the 5th to 8th percentile, or three children's from the 15th to the 21st?

children, and in the dollar amount per-pupil spent at present and under proposed changes. The existence of a few sites where per-pupil concentration will increase should offer further evidence on the theory of "critical mass," and we intend to supplement the findings of these projects by conducting additional research into the relationship between concentration and program effectiveness.

GPO 893-323